

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES & RESEARCH THE MITCHELL INSTITUTE



HEATHER PENNEY is Director of Studies and Research at the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies. She oversees and manages all research endeavors, Forum papers, Mitchell reports, and other associated releases. She is also the host of Mitchell’s podcast, the “Aerospace Advantage,” where she discusses important air and space power defense topics with industry experts, senior service leaders, and current warfighters; and she continues to conduct extensive research on cutting-edge defense policy with a focus on the leveraging the critical advantage that only aerospace power affords.

BACKGROUND: Prior to joining Mitchell, Penney worked over a decade in the defense industry focusing on defense budgets, supporting combat aircraft program execution, and capture campaign management. She served in the Washington, DC Air National Guard flying F-16s, executing Operation Noble Eagle as well as two combat tours; flew DV airlift in G-100s as a mission commander; and served in the Air Force Reserve in the National Military Command Center. She has lectured extensively on subjects such as Air Force capabilities and force structure, force management, defense industrial policy, future operational concepts, advanced technologies in warfare, and other defense policy issues to a broad number of organizations, universities, and military institutions.

AREAS OF FOCUS: Penney is a recognized expert on defense policy issues concerning autonomous aerial systems, software maintenance and operations, autonomy, and force structure considerations. Penney is established voice on distributed and networked warfare, collaborative combat aircraft and autonomy, and future operational concepts associated with information architectures.

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL TITLES: Penney received her undergraduate degree from Purdue University, majoring in English with a minor in Philosophy. She earned her MA in American Studies from Purdue University. She earned her wings at Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training (ENJJPT) at Sheppard AFB, and qualified in the F-16C at the 149th FTW at Kelly ANGB. She has successfully completed numerous industry executive leadership courses and holds multiple aviation certifications.
